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ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

To Principals of Collegiate Institutes, Vocational, High and Continuation Schools

Re Departmental Examinations in Grade XIII English Literature and Composition

I. THE ENGLISH LITERATURE EXAMINATION OF 1947

The following information in regard to the work of the candidates at the Upper School examination of 1947 in English Literature is presented in the hope that it may prove helpful to teachers of English in the secondary schools. It is to be understood that the allotment of marks to the several parts of the course and the comments upon the candidates' answers apply only to this Examination and that neither the scale of valuations nor the form of questions will necessarily be duplicated in future examinations in the subject.

The answer papers were evaluated on the basis of 100 marks, which were divided as follows: Shakespeare—21; Longer Poems—23; Shorter Poems—18; *Pride and Prejudice* or *Maria Chapdelaine*—12; Short Stories and Essays—12; Sight Poetry—14.

I. FORM OF ANSWERS

It remains important that answers should be properly spaced, accurately numbered for parts and sub-parts, and written legibly. Quotations should not only be worked into sentences which are structurally correct, but should be identified as quotations by the use of quotation marks.

Candidates should give due attention to a reasonable distribution of the examination time among the questions on the paper. It was found frequently in 1947 answer papers that, because so much time had been given to the answering of question 1, the candidate hurried unduly in answering later questions and sometimes failed to complete the paper. Since in the preparation of the examination care is taken to secure a well-balanced and representative arrangement of the questions, candidates should recognize that neglect of any question is serious.

Candidates who have had regular training in writing on formal examinations during the school year, not only in Grade XIII, but also in the lower grades, are at a distinct advantage with respect to effective organization of their answers at a departmental examination in English Literature.

Weaker students by failing to use topic sentences gave rambling answers which did not bear directly on the question. Training in the analysis of the wording of the questions would help to avoid a mere paraphrase or synopsis of a poem or story where a critical analysis is required.

Full credit could not be given to merely tabulated answers.

II. ERRORS IN SPELLING

In 1947 as in former years, deductions to a maximum of ten were made for errors in spelling. It is suggested that because an appreciable number of all candidates writing failed as a result of errors in spelling and the grades of many others were adversely affected, some time might be advantageously devoted even in Upper School classes to the spelling of such words as *rhyme, rhythm, its, soliloquies, tragedy, resembles, suspense, simile, alliteration, sequel, speech, receive, repetition, superstition, scheme, woman, stubbornness.*

III. FAULTY USAGE

Candidates should be reminded that answers should be written in clear, correct English, and that major errors in sentence structure, bad grammar, persistent lack of punctuation, conspicuous failure to use capitals and serious misuse of words result in loss of marks.

IV. NOTES ON THE ANSWERS

Question 1:

This question was, for the most part, well answered. Although the answers were specific and well illustrated, more care might have been taken in pointing out the *means* whereby character was revealed. Also, some pupils lost time and marks through the writing of mere narrative. The following answer by a candidate is well organized and adequate:

> Hotspur is one of the leading characters in the play, and Shakespeare has portrayed him through the description given by other characters, by Hotspur's own dialogue, by placing him in different circumstances, and by contrasting him with other characters.
>
> In the first scene the king mentions him as "gallant Hotspur" and also calls him "fortune's minion . . . of all the grove the very straightest plant." Later when he tries to shame the Prince for his lack of interest in the war and the kingdom he calls Hotspur ". . . Mars in swathling clothes."
>
> We get a clear idea of Hotspur's character from his own language. When he first hears of the plot from Worcester he says, "Methinks it were an easy leap to pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon." He goes on to tell that he wants honour only for himself. We soon find that his is a selfish ambition and lust for personal honour and fame. We see that he is short-tempered when he reads the letter from the lord who refuses to join the plotters. Hotspur explodes, "I could brain him with his lady's fan." When in a later scene all the other plotters are fully aware that fate is turning against them because Hotspur's father and Glendower cannot come, Hotspur thinks of nothing but war, refuses to see the danger, and says, "Die all, die merrily."
>
> By placing Hotspur in different circumstances Shakespeare shows us the character of the man even better. His light treatment of his wife shows him to be pre-occupied and absent minded. When his wife asks him what takes him away he answers lightly, "My horse, my love, my horse."
>
> Shakespeare contrasts Hotspur with other characters thus emphasizing his qualities and faults more. On the meeting of Glendower and Hotspur we have well contrasted

these two, the sentimental, conceited, yet cultured Glendower, with the proud, intolerant, tactless Hotspur. Glendower proudly states that at his birth, the front of heaven was filled with fiery shapes, while Hotspur retorts that it would have been so if his mother's cat but kittened.

Questions 2 and 6—Appreciation of Poetic Merits:

In the answers to these questions there were two main faults:

(1) Failure to realize that Shakespeare's plays are written almost entirely in poetry, and (2) a tendency merely to synopsize or paraphrase the selection or poem instead of naming and illustrating its poetic qualities.

Some of the following qualities of good poetry might have been discussed in either of questions 2 or 6:

(a) The quality or impressiveness, or the importance of the thought expressed.

(b) The emotional effects of the passage.

(c) The effective use of imagery, or colour or sound patterns.

(d) The effect of particular figures of speech.

(e) The kind of diction and the effect of its use.

(f) The use of literary devices such as pause, contrast, apostrophe, rhetorical questions, alliterations, repetition, climax, etc.

(g) The merits of the verse form and rhyme scheme, or the rhythm and melody of the language.

A good answer should (1) *name* the quality or merit, (2) *illustrate* it by direct references to the text, and if possible (3) *comment* upon the particular effectiveness or result achieved. The training in criticism of prose style in the Upper School Composition course should be of assistance to students, for the form of answer is much the same and many of the above merits apply to both good prose and good poetry.

However, the student should show some real feeling for poetic values and not be driven in desperation to saying that "In 'The Tempest' one of the poetic merits of it was the repetition of 'Bow-wow'," or "Much of the Shakespeare play could have been re-written into poetry without much trouble."

A thorough study of memorized passages or poems would have been of great assistance to weaker students.

The following answers to Questions 2 and 6, respectively, were considered very satisfactory:

> Antony's funeral speech has a special merit as poetry because it is full of force and is very vivid. In it are woven all the emotions which Antony had to hide from the conspirators, and in it, Antony reveals his true character. It contains almost all the arts of oratory and is the most moving part of the whole play. Much of this is caused by the repetition used in the piece—"is this ambition," and by the irony which is its very substance—"but Brutus is an honorable man." The passage also contains vivid wording. Antony speaks of Caesar's red wounds and using similes and metaphors, he calls them "poor, dumb, mouths." The tempo of the piece rises and falls with the speaker's emotions. When Antony says, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen; I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him," the rhythm is easy and natural. As Antony becomes more dramatic, the tempo becomes more impassioned and more threatening, until the dramatic pause. It becomes fiery and dramatic again, as Antony shouts, "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now." The rhythm is thus very forceful; the metre is all blank verse. The diction is simple because the speaker is speaking to the mob, who are uneducated. Antony's simple words—"I am a poor, blunt man"—appeal to the uneducated people. Unity is present in the piece, because Antony begins calmly and carefully and gradually mounts to a fiery closing with the word "mutiny." Suspense is used when Antony mentions the will, but says he must not read it. The mob immediately cry, "The will, the will, we'll have the will."
>
> It can be seen that this selection is one of the finest pieces of poetry, and it moves the reader as it moved the mob. The whole passage, from the time Antony greets the mob, through the stages of showing the people Caesar's mantle, his body and his will, to the final dramatic climax, which urges mutiny against the butchers who murdered Caesar is a gripping, vivid selection of poetry.

> The Potato Harvest is very vivid and clear-cut. The picture it paints cannot help but remain in the reader's mind. He sees the high, brown fields, the amber sky, the birds swarming home to their nests, the rolling tide, the cattle, the zigzag fence, the pond, the wagon and the oxen, the workers, and the loads of produce.

The author causes this effect by using colour words; some of these are brown, amber, and black. Alliteration is present in the phrase "rocking roosts." An exact but simple simile is contained in the last line—"the day fades out like smoke." Roberts uses a striking metaphor when he mentions the "amber wastes of sky washing the ridge." These figures of speech increase the reality of the picture.

The Potato Harvest is a fine illustration of the sonnet. The octave pictures nature at the close of day as birds fly to rest, the sun sinks, and the tide is exhausted. The sestet pictures the farmers and workers emptying their pails into the carts, and the carts disappearing down the hill. The sestet ends peacefully as day fades out.

Imitative harmony adds to the vividness of the scene as it mentions the cart lumbering down the hill.

Simple, home-like words are employed by the author in keeping with his subject—the farm and nature.

A striking, clear picture is left with the reader after reading this poem; it is so striking that he could easily paint it—if he were a painter. The reader is left with a feeling of peace and just a little weariness.

Question 3:

(a) *endued*—endowed, gifted, possessing as a native quality. *master-bias*—principal inclination or chief disposition towards.

(b) *sequel*—the outcome, aftermath, consequence, result. *unsolders*—dissolves, separates, breaks the bonds of—

Answers of candidates indicated that a conscious attempt at word study had been made. However, many answers failed to give "the connection of each passage with the poem" (that is, explain the thought in the light of its context in the poem.) The weaker students gave a paraphrase of the passage or merely named the poem.

Question 4:

The first option, on the whole, was fairly well answered. Various ways of heightening suspense were accepted; e.g. doubt, series of sub-climaxes, the supernatural, extended similes, fate, etc.

or

In the second option candidates received full marks if they discussed adequately the effectiveness of any two similar or

different figures of speech. While a quotation of parts of the figure of speech was desirable for identification, a precis was accepted. The answer should have included an analysis of the figure of speech to show how its descriptive, imaginative or emotional effects were such as to enlarge and add force to the thought of the passage in which it was found.

Question 5:

Many candidates did not know how to handle a question involving comparison. By dealing with the theme, diction, and effect on the reader of one poem, and then by treating the other similarly, they frequently missed the marks allowed for comparison. Practice in this type of question is necessary. The following answer was given a good grading:

> Though the poems *Caller Herrin'* and *An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog* seem quite different there are some phases which can be compared.
>
> The theme of *Caller Herrin'* is to show that people's ideas of a poor class such as fishermen are often erroneous, and would be changed if the people knew more of the lives of fishermen. The theme of Goldsmith's poem is more ironical but similar because it shows that people's opinions of a man's character are not always correct if only outward signs are considered.
>
> The diction of *Caller Herrin'* though it is dialogue in direct speech and Scottish dialect to give local colour, still has such phrases as, "turn their heads and screw their faces" which has some of the vividness and simplicity of word choice that the *Elegy* has in such phrases as, "The naked every day he clad when he put on his clothes." Both poems are faintly didactic. *Caller Herrin'* ends with the statement that truth will always endure, while *Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog* shows that it is foolish to judge people or circumstances by a little outward evidence. Both the poems leave the reader with a feeling of pathos mixed with some humour, strangely enough. Lady Nairne's poem makes the reader sympathetic with the hard lot of the fisherman yet slightly amused at the brogue and quaint manner of expression. Goldsmith's poem leaves the reader with more of a feeling of amusement at the unexpected event of the dog's death, yet the death adds some pathos however faint.

Question 7:

A definite attempt should have been made to discuss the logical sequence of events rather than simply to retell the story. Many students found difficulty also in discussing the structural plan of the story because they lacked a knowledge of such terms as *conflict*, *introduction*, *complication*, *climax*, and *conclusion*. The following answer was considered to have special merit:

The Essence of a Man

In the introduction we meet the hero of *The Essence of a Man*. He and his dogs are black specks on a measureless counterpane, fighting indomitably against a winter storm. The scene is set with a few brief strokes of a pen, the half-breed is put to sleep, and then the story is introduced. This device is often used, and here it is so natural that it does not obtrude. While the hero is asleep, we find out the circumstances of the story—and then plunge headlong into the plot. The first incident is the key to the whole series. A lynx hunting food kills two dogs, and wounds others, mentally and physically. The half-breed shrugs his shoulders, and "indomitably" faces the elements. His head dog dies. This causes him to weep a tear or two, but, undaunted, he fights on. His remaining dogs go wild, eat his food and leave him the travail of guarding the Hudson's Bay goods all night and walking all day. Nevertheless, he pushes on, "indomitable." His mind becomes confused, he begins to doubt his Christianity, but still he goes on. Nor snow, nor fatigue, nor anything can stop this courier from his appointed task. At the climax of the story he reaches his destination—but he has not eaten for five days. "Hudson's Bay grub," he says. This then is the Essence of a Man—of Tom the half-breed: indomitability and integrity. Thus we see that the thought of the story progresses logically throughout the whole story, and is held in unison by the underlying idea of the author, the indomitability of the hero.

Question 8:

In this question, too, many students developed a character sketch or a narrative rather than an answer to the question.

In the *Pride and Prejudice* option such devices as the following might have been noted and illustrated: contrast,

accentuation of certain characteristics, the use of words and actions to reveal character.

A common fault in answering the second option was the failure of the student to select a noteworthy event. Another fault was the synopsizing of the chosen event rather than showing how the author had presented it effectively.

The following answer to this question was given high marks:

> The news of the death of Francois is especially well done. One evening Eutrope brings the news and does not know quite how to go about telling it. When he finally does tell the story, horror and grief are felt by the whole family. M. Chapdelaine remarks, "We are but little children in the hands of God," which brings out their intensely religious nature as well as relieving the grief. Maria, however, receives the news at first with no show of emotion; this is very realistic—many people, when they receive bad news, show no signs of grief on the spot. It is almost as if they find the thing hard to believe. Such was the case with Maria. Her grief, however, was tinged with a deep love, because Francois had died while on his way to see her. After a moment she goes outside and all the grief strikes her at once. Her thoughts and feelings are fully and effectively expressed by such phrases as, "like the keen blade of a hungry sword"—referring to the cold, which had taken Francois and would take her, if given the chance. "She felt the deadly grasp of those cold fingers closed about her heart," is an effective way of expressing the cramping, choking feeling in her heart.
>
> As she stands looking at the gloomy forest, she suddenly realizes that she hates it, and it is implied by this that she will try to get away if she can. She imagines the death of Francois; "now his food is nearly gone, now the cold tortures him." This is an excellent example of the use of the present historic tense for a vivid impression. It seems to make everything more real and striking.
>
> The time at which the news arrives is particularly effective. On Christmas Eve Maria said a thousand Aves for the return of Francois and now less than eight days later he is dead. This brings out the deep tragedy of their lives. It might have caused some to doubt their faith in God, but such was not the case with Maria. Her religion was something which could not be questioned even if at times it did seem cruel.

Lastly the use of the word "ecarte" is noteworthy. In reality it meant "gone astray," but it carried with it the implication of cold and torture and suffering. It also serves to emphasize the fact that even an experienced woodsman like Francois could get lost in the wilds of his native countryside.

Question 9:

In general the sight question was well answered. However, in (a) part, some candidates in dealing with the two experiences neglected the obvious present experience and thus failed to receive full credit. In (c) part, candidates frequently failed to deal with "insidious" and "betrays."

It is suggested that, when an anthology of poetry is being studied, teachers, instead of "teaching" all the poems, might reserve for study as sight passages a number of poems which lend themselves to such work.

Sight work should be made a part of the Literature course in *all* grades.

The following answers to this question were regarded as satisfactory:

(9a) There are two experiences described in this poem, one happening in the poet's present life and one that has happened in the past. In the present he is listening to a woman sing and it reminds him of his childhood. He tries to listen only for the present, but his mind keeps going back. Even when the singer comes to a loud, passionate part in the music he cannot stop thinking of the past. The second experience is one in the past, the one which the song reminds him of. It is a picture of his childhood, when his mother sang to him at the piano and he was happy at home on Sunday of a winter night. The two experiences are connected by the piano and the song which the woman is singing.

(9b) The poet uses descriptive detail to convey his emotion to the reader. Such phrases as, "boom of the tingling strings. . .", "cosy parlour", "tinkling piano"—tell why the emotions come to him and such phrases as "heart of me weeps". . . "glamour of childish days. . .", "flood of remembrance. . .", "I weep like a child". . . show us the emotion itself.

(9c) ". . . the insidious mastery of song betrays me back." This means that the quiet, cunning working of the music brings back memories. He would rather not think of memories but the music is so overmastering in its ability to bring emotion to him that it is insidious or almost sly.

2. THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION EXAMINATION OF 1947

The following comments on the Upper School examination of 1947 in English Composition are made in the hope that they will prove useful to teachers of this subject. It should be understood, however, that the allotment of marks and the method of marking used in this examination will not necessarily apply in the future, except that, according to the Courses of Study (Circular H.S. 1B, Feb. 1947), 60 marks are prescribed for the essay part of the paper.

I. THE ESSAY

1. The standards for the grading of the essay were the same as those given in H.S. Circular 4C, November, 1945.

2. In this question the candidate was expected to exhibit a reasonable degree of maturity, in thought as well as in expression. Consequently, an essay, even if correctly written, was put below the line if in the opinion of the Committee it was inadequate or childish in content.

3. Candidates were not penalized for exceeding the suggested length of 350 words unless their essays contained redundancies and "padding."

4. A few candidates attempted to answer this question by using passages obviously prepared beforehand. This practice did not work to the advantage of the candidate and should be discouraged by teachers.

5. If a candidate writes his essay in rough and for lack of time fails to recopy it, he should be advised, to correct his rough copy as carefully as time permits. On the other hand, many candidates made errors by copying rough work carelessly. Full-stops, exclamation, and interrogation marks were too frequently omitted. The examiners were pleased that most of the candidates wrote their rough work in ink, but many could make a better impression by improving their penmanship.

6. Essays were judged for their positive merits and penalized for errors. The following list gives examples of common errors:

(a) improper paragraphing;
(b) undesirable shifts in tense, person, or number;
(c) misuse of participles, gerunds, or infinitives—("dangling" and misrelated, etc.);
(d) lack of agreement between verb and subject, pronoun and antecedent;
(e) pronouns with indefinite antecedents;
(f) errors in case;
(g) misplaced modifiers;
(h) crudities in diction;
(i) such verb forms as "I done," "would of done";
(j) faulty use of double negatives;
(k) use of "like" for "as" or "as if";
(l) unidiomatic use of prepositions;
(m) inappropriate use of repetition;
(n) errors in sentence structure (incompleteness; confusion and incoherence; the "comma blunder"; "when"; "where", "because" clauses used in place of noun clauses; faulty subordination and coordination of clauses; faulty ellipsis or incomplete comparison; lack of parallelism);
(o) inappropriate use of the passive voice;
(p) incorrect syllabication at the end of lines;
(q) use of such abbreviations as "gov't.", "dept.";
(r) misuse of the apostrophe;
(s) misuse of capital letters;
(t) faulty punctuation.

II. VOCABULARY TEST

It will be noted that this year most of the words in this question were taken from the Literature course, but it is to be understood that this method of testing the vocabulary of a Grade XIII student will not necessarily be repeated from year to year.

In this question, two marks were awarded for each word correctly defined. A synonym was considered acceptable in place of a definition. An answer in which a word was defined in terms of itself received no mark, except when the word was properly qualified or when it brought out the derivation. Some

extended meanings given in dictionaries were accepted; e.g., "luxuriance" for "opulence." Not all synonyms of these extended meanings were acceptable, however; e.g., "exuberance" for "opulence." A candidate was expected to define the word as the correct part of speech, although it was not necessary for him to name the part of speech; "opulence, wealthy—1 mark; "opulence, adjective, wealthy"—1 mark; "opulence, wealth"—2 marks.

To gain the mark for using the word correctly in a sentence, the candidate had to write a sentence in which the prescribed word was used idiomatically and in which the meaning of the word was unmistakably clear and accurate.

III. THE PRECIS

Twenty-five marks were assigned for the precis—16 for matter and 9 for style.

1. *Matter*

To receive 16 marks for matter, a candidate must have included in his precis eight significant points. A point clearly and competently stated received 2 marks; a less adequate statement was given 1 mark.

Certain faults were penalized by specific deductions.

(a) When the precis exceeded the stipulated length of 150 words, one mark was deducted for the first 11 words in excess of 150, and an additional mark for each succeeding 10 words up to a maximum of 10 marks.

(b) One mark was deducted for the introduction of each extraneous point.

(c) Each distortion of a single point was penalized one mark.

Most students recognized the principal points of the passage and understood its purport.

2. *Style*

The precis was judged as a miniature essay. Full marks were given for a concise, coherent, competent style, both when it showed originality and when it was somewhat imitative of the style of the quoted passage.

Two marks were deducted for each type of major error up to a maximum of six; minor errors also reduced the mark.

Common faults in the precis were imprecision of diction, a lack of adequate interlinking of sentences, and a disproportion in subject matter.

The following is an example of a candidate's good answer to Question 3:

> Europeans or Englishmen may ridicule or despise America's second charm, social equality. To them it suggests boldness and poor manners. Actually, equality, by strengthening respect for everyone regardless of position improves manners. Years ago it may have harmed them, because townsfolks' manners were generally recognized as bad, and the unrefined showed self-assertiveness towards newcomers from Europe. But now its naturalness, long establishment and general acceptance have destroyed any excuse for obtrusiveness. Folk meet on a common ground with utmost ease, since all are equally respected. Obsequiousness amongst the humbler is absent. Only now immigrants to whom the attitude of equality is strange, are self-asserting. The rich are neither condescending nor politely cool, yet their dignity remains unharmed, as long as they remember it. Any common worker can address you as an equal, and still respect any kind of superiority you may claim.